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NEGATIVE BURN
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ML94
64 PAGES

NEGATIVE BURN

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written by Aldyth Beltane
illustrated by Kevin O'Neill

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by Brian Michael Bendis

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"If there's a reason, there's a season. *Abyss Also Grasps* is right there, right now: a lovely story, raging with high-concept intensity wrapped around a powerful subtext. Pass this one up and you're a stone chump!"

Andrew Vachss
author

IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT YEAR. MORE THAN A YEAR, ACTUALLY, BUT THE TRULY SALIENT EVENTS TOOK PLACE IN ABOUT A YEAR'S TIME.
ALRIGHT EVERYTHING TIME TO GO
GRIEF
ENJOY
199
BUMMER
BAD
VIBES
SAN FRANCISCO
THE ABYSS ALSO GRASPS
STORY: ALDYTH BELTHANE
ART: KEVIN O'NEILL LETTERING: ROXANNE STARR

I HAD BEEN STRESSED, MORE THAN MY USUAL NORM. WITHIN A WEEK, MY HEALTH WENT NUTS, THE GOVERNMENT DEMANDED $6,000 IN BACK TAXES, (HOW I CAN'T IMAGINE...
$6000
IRS
OUR RENT WAS RAISED...BUT THAT WAS JUST THE SET-UP, THE PROLOGUE.
YOU KNOW WHAT MAKES
RENT
I DON'T THINK I EVEN EARNED SO MUCH THAT YEAR!)
PS. GIMME MORE
O'NEILL

SOON AFTER, WITH THE IDEA OF SAVING MONEY FOR US ALL, WE MOVED INTO A LOVELY HOUSE WITH A WOMAN WE CONSIDERED A *FRIEND*.
SHORTLY AFTER THAT, SHE TOOK ON A NEW LOVER, AND WITHIN A FEW WEEKS OF THAT, SHE WENT *CHEMICALLY AND BELLIGERENTLY MAD*.
THINGS GO BETTER WITH POKE
TO DYKE FOR
MY HUSBAND AND I LIVED THROUGH ABOUT *FOUR MONTHS OF AGGRESSIVE AND INSANE BEHAVIOR*, PUNCTUATED BY FITS OF SCREAMING AND THREATS OF KNIFE ATTACKS.
MY CLEAREST MEMORY OF THIS TIME, ASIDE FROM THE *KNIVES*, IS US TREMBLING DOWNSTAIRS, AS THE UPSTAIRS VIBRATED WITH *YELLING, STOMPING*, AND *LOUD, BAD MUSIC*.
EVENTUALLY, THE WOMAN AND HER LOVER MOVED OUT.

AND SO WE GOT A ROOMMATE.
"HE WAS A QUIET SORT. KEPT TO HIMSELF." THAT'S WHAT THE NEIGHBORS SAY, ISN'T IT, WHEN SOMEONE IN THEIR CLOSE PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, BUT WHOM THEY DON'T REALLY KNOW, TURNS OUT TO BE A FREAK.
ICE
I WISH I WERE BLACK
AND SO FOR MONTHS HE LIVED IN OUR HOME. HE TRIED TO AFFECT OUR LIVES IN WAYS WHICH, ALTHOUGH NOT SUBTLE, WERE NOT OVERT ENOUGH FOR DIRECT CONFRONTATION. WE TRIED TO PLAY MY MAN AND I AGAINST EACH OTHER FOR A TIME.
BITCH!
BASTARD!
I LET HIM KNOW, IN MY OWN WAY, THAT THAT TRICK NEVER WORKS FOR LONG. FOR OUR PART, WE CONSOLED OURSELVES WITH THE FACT THAT AT LEAST HE WAS QUIET.
HE REVEALED HIMSELF. ONE NIGHT, A DEAR FRIEND OF OURS STAYED OVERNIGHT. HE ATTEMPTED TO SEXUALLY ASSAULT OUR FRIEND ...THEN TOLD OUR FRIEND NOT TO TELL.
TEXTBOOK FREAK BEHAVIOR.
HOT
live!
HOT ADAM & EVE ACTION
live!
erotic
LIVE PLAYBOY
Nude!
SEX
IRONICALLY, WE HAD STAYED UP LATE THAT NIGHT DISCUSSING AMERICA'S PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIM AND PREDATOR IN CASES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT. IT WAS THE ONE PART OF THE NIGHT THAT THE ROOMMATE DIDN'T INJECT HIMSELF INTO.

IT TOOK ANOTHER THREE MONTHS, FULL OF LIES AND BARELY VEILED DISGUST, BUT AT LAST WE GOT HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE.
HUNG
BABE MAGNET
PLAYBOY
ONE SIZE FITS ALL
LATER WE FOUND OUT HE'D BEEN USING HIS JOB AS A *RECORD DISTRIBUTOR'S PHONE REP* TO STALK WOMEN.
SHUDDER.
A CYCLE THAT TOOK NEARLY A YEAR.
AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS THE *HOUSE*. IN SAD, INSANE MOMENTS I WONDERED IF SOMEHOW THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE HOUSE THAT BROUGHT OUT WHATEVER WAS TWISTED IN PEOPLE. THE WOMAN WHO LIVED THERE BEFORE US CLAIMED THERE WAS A *MERIDIAN FLUX* IN THE DOWNSTAIRS BEDROOM.
BUT SHE WAS INSANE *TOO*. I KNOW IT'S JUST A *DRAFT*.
AND THE PROBLEM WAS *NOT* THE HOUSE, IN ANY CASE. WITH OUR NEW HOUSEMATE, IT'S BECOMING THE LOVING AND FUN PLACE IT SHOULD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.
HOWEVER.

FOR WEEKS TURNING INTO MONTHS AFTER THESE EVENTS I KEPT BUSY...ANY BUSY. IN RETROSPECT, I AM AMAZED AT THE THINGS I CLUTTERED MY MIND WITH TO AVOID DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF WHAT WE HAD LIVED WITH.
DYKES WITH KNIVES AND THE SMASH RECORDS STALKER SOUNDS LIKE A B-MOVIE DOUBLE FEATURE.
AND WE *LIVED* IT.
LOW SLOW READY TO BLOW
LIFE GOT SLOWER, AND SLIGHTLY EASIER, AND I BEGAN TO THINK. NOT THE FRENZIED, SOAP OPERA, "OH MY GOD, YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE..." RANTING THAT I FELT WHEN RELAYING THE EVENTS AS THEY TRANSPIRED, BUT ACTUAL ANALYSIS. AND THIS IS WHEN I REALIZED I HAD NOT COME THROUGH UNSCATHED.
LET ME INJECT AT THIS POINT THAT I HAD LIVED THROUGH WEIRD SCENES BEFORE. IN FACT, HAD SPENT THE LAST FEW YEARS FASTIDIOUSLY AVOIDING THEM.
YET, I HAD NEVER BEEN AFFECTED LIKE *THIS* BEFORE.
STRESS
MY SPACE
IT WASN'T THAT I AVOIDED FRIENDS, KEPT ACQUAINTANCES AT A DISTANCE. I'D DISCONNECTED LIKE THAT BEFORE, IN TIMES OF STRESS. NOPE, IT WAS THE *BUS RIDES*, AND *SIMILAR* LITTLE ENCOUNTERS.

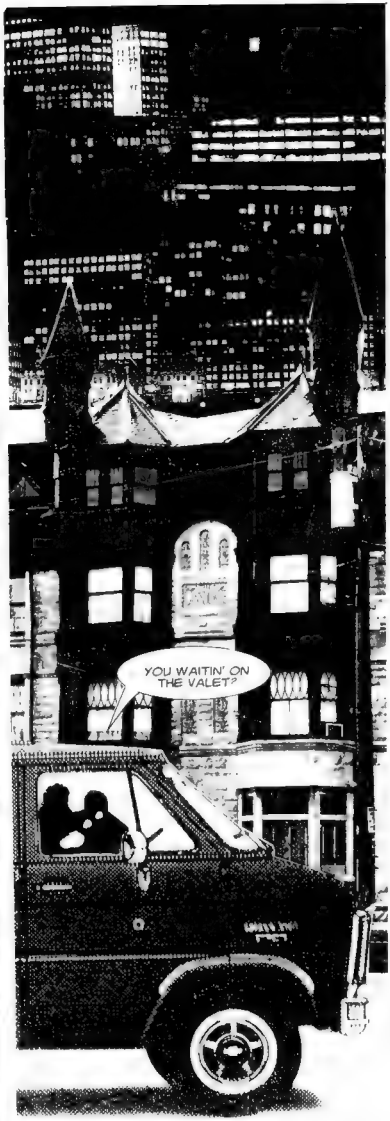
EACH MORNING THAT I WOULD STEP ON THE BUS, I WOULD TAKE MY SEAT AND WATCH THE PEOPLE AROUND ME...SAFE BEHIND MY MIRRORED SHADES.
666 HAIGHT
...THE OLDER RUSSIAN WOMEN WITH SAGGING JOWLS AND DISAPPROVING EXPRESSIONS.
...BRIGHT YOUNG STUDENTS, FROM GOOD FAMILIES, TALKING IN GUTTER SLANG WITH EASE.
...EXECUTIVES OF EITHER GENDER, READING NEWSPAPERS, DRESSED IN PLAIN EXPENSIVE, CLOTHES.
AND SO MANY OTHERS...
AND I WOULD LOOK AT THEM AND WONDER: *WHAT IS IN YOUR HEAD?*
WHAT TWEAKS AND PSYCHOSES *DRIVE* YOU?
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT, ALL ALONE IN THE DARK?
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN NO ONE'S WATCHING?
WHO DO YOU *HATE* AND WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT IT?
BILE
ME
BACK AT YOU
ME
HATE
AND THEN MY EYES WOULD FALL ON ONE PERSON IN THEM ALL. PERHAPS HE WOULD NOTICE, AND KNOW THAT I KNOW. PERHAPS NOT, BUT A CHILL WOULD RUN THROUGH ME AS I WONDERED...
the HORROR
HAVE YOU MADE YOUR FIRST KILL OR ONLY *THOUGHT* ABOUT IT?
WAS IT A MAN, A WOMAN, OR A CHILD?
DID YOU *KNOW* THE VICTIM?
AND WHAT DID IT TAKE TO FINALLY SET YOU OFF, TO BREAK THAT *LAST BARRIER?*
WAS IT ROMANTIC REJECTION?
A BAD DAY AT WORK?
BUGS!
DID YOUR BOSS, YOUR MOTHER, YOUR BROTHER CALL YOU WORTHLESS ONCE TOO OFTEN?
OR WAS IT A SNIDE AND WITTY COMMENT FROM SOMEONE LIKE ME?
THE END

MR. MAMOULIAN CONVENTION

26 & 88 BOLLAND 34

HALF A PINT OF LAGER, PLEASE.
RIGHT YOU ARE, LOVE... OOOOOH LOOK AT THAT! WHAT'S THAT SHINY RECTANGULAR THING PINNED TO YOUR MANLY CHEST!?
DON'T TELL ME! LET ME GUESS! YOU'RE AT A CONVENTION!
ER...
I KNEW IT!
WE GET ALL SORTS OF CONVENTION PEOPLE IN 'ERE. LAST WEEK IT WAS DEEP SEA DIVERS! BEFORE THAT WE 'AD BODY BUILDERS! YOU NAME IT, WE'VE 'AD 'EM!
WE'VE 'AD POODLE OWNERS, PIGEON FANCIERS, NEWT FANCIERS, LION TAMERS, WART CHARMERS, FLEA TRAINERS, PIG BREEDERS, BEAR BAITERS, BARE-BACK RIDERS AND BARE FACED LIARS...
WE'VE 'AD INSURANCE BROKERS, DOUBLE GLAZING SALESMEN, SYSTEMS ANALYSTS, TRAINEE PERSONNEL MANAGERS, MANAGERIAL CONSULTANTS, BEHAVIOURAL THERAPISTS, AND FUNERAL DIRECTORS...
WE'VE 'AD THE FREEMASONS, THE ODDFELLOWS, THE WORSHIPFUL ORDER OF BEDFELLOWS, THE BOY SCOUTS, THE ROTARIANS, THE DRUIDS, THE GENERAL SYNOD, THE SECRET SIX, THE K.G.B., THE ILLUMINATI! THEY'VE ALL BEEN 'ERE TAKIN' A BREAK FROM THE CONVENTION!
I'VE SERVED 'EM ALL. WE'VE 'AD CARDIOLOGISTS, RADIOLOGISTS, OTO-RHINO-LARYNGOLOGISTS, PARTHENOGENETICISTS, NUMISMATISTS, PHILATELISTS, ICTHYOLOGISTS, LEPIDOPTERERS, LEXICOGRAPHERS, PRESTIDIGITATORS, DOXOLOGISTS, APOLOGISTS, HAGIOGRAPHERS, TACTICIANS, STRATEGISTS AND FETISHISTS...
WE'VE 'AD THE NATIONAL FRONT, THE RED WEDGE, THE FLAT EARTH SOCIETY, THE PAINE AND PLEASURE RAINBOW PARTY, THE P.L.O., THE C OF E, THE METHODISTS, THE CONTRAS, THE GNOSTICS, THE ROSICRUCIANS, THE CHRISTADELPHIANS, THE ZOROASTRIANS, THE DAKOITS, THE SLAVES OF SIN, THE QUAKERS, THE BENDERS AND SHAKERS, THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT. THEY ALL COME IN 'ERE EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT ARMS!
WE GET THE PEOPLE WHO PAINT LANE CLOSED SIGNS ON MOTORWAYS, THE PEOPLE WHO ARRANGE FOR ALL THE №7 BUSES TO COME AT ONCE, THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE SURE THAT THE CASHPOINT IS OUT OF ORDER JUST WHEN YOU REALLY NEED IT, THE PEOPLE WHO REMOVE THE PEGS FROM THE INSIDE OF PUBLIC LAVS SO YOU CAN'T HANG YOUR COAT UP! YOU NAME 'EM, WE'VE 'AD 'EM!
THEY'VE ALL BEEN 'ERE GETTING TANKED UP, COMPLAINING ABOUT THEIR WIVES. WHATEVER IT IS THEY DO THEY GET TOGETHER AND HAVE CONVENTIONS! THEY'RE ALL THE SAME... JUST A LOTTA BIG KIDS!
NOW, I WONDER WHAT KIND OF CONVENTION YOU'RE AT, LOVEY... DON'T TELL ME....
LINGERIE!

THAT'S ALL YOU GOT?
BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS'
JINX
I SAY: THAT'S ALL YOU GOT?
HUH? YAH, YAH- THAT'S IT
WILL THIS WORK? I MEAN...
I GOT A SISTER'S NAME, UNLISTED NUMBER, AND TA-DA- HIS DARLING LITTLE GIRLFRIEND'S NAME, SHE IS LISTED.
THIS I GOTTA SEE
WATCH ME... BABE
I DON'T KNOW
AS LONG AS YOU KNOW YOUR STUFF? OK? YOU GOT IT? YOU KNOW WHAT AND WHEN?
YAH! YAH!! EASY PIECES
Y'KNOW,... I'M COUNTIN' ON YOU THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN, WE DON'T GET PAID.
HEY! AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A THING


YOU WAITIN' ON THE VALET?

ANYWAY- NO..I./ GOT THIS GREAT PAIR OF PUMPS F...
WHAT? NO.
NO.
THEY GO WITH THAT POLKA DOT TOP THAT I...
OH SHIT!
THERE'S SOMEONE AT... I GOTTA GO.
I WILL
I WILL.
I GOTTA GO.
TWO MINUTES!
HOL' ON. HOL' ON.
I...
YES?
IS RICK HERE?
WHO ARE YOU?
ARE YOU BECKY?
YES.
I JUST NEED TO TALK TO R-RICK.
WHO ARE YOU?

WHO AM I? I THOUGHT I WAS RICK'S GIRLFRIEND...
BUT IT SEEMS THAT I'M JUST SOME TRAMP HE FUCKED.
...AND NOW LOOK AT ME!
WHAT?!?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHAT IS.....?
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
I'M ALL AL- -ALONE.
I-UHAH, I'VE GOT NO ONE.
:SNIFF:
SUZIE TOLD ME HE MIGHT BE HERE, I...
SUIZIE? SUZIE?!
OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD!
HONK
:SOB:
IS HE EVEN HERE? I'M SO ASHAMED
HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?
W-WHO ARE YOU?
I'M SO SORRY.
I JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO!
:SOB:

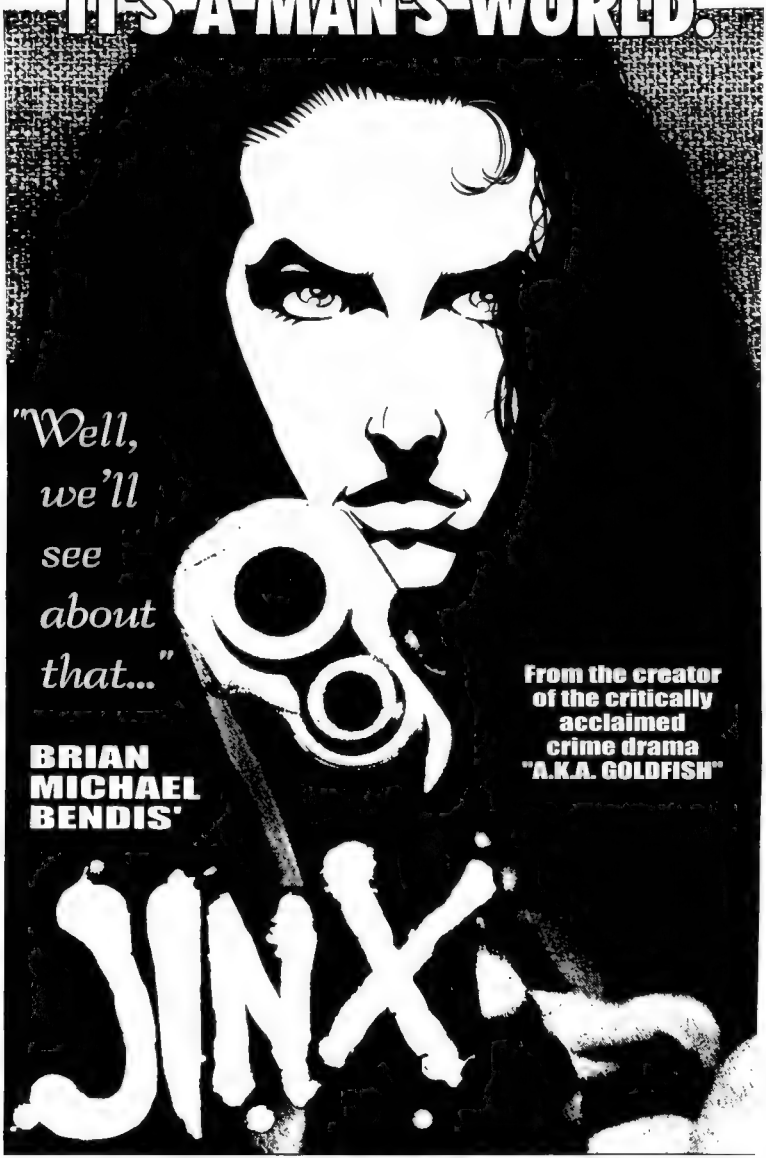
GIRL - -
I THINK
YOU BETTER
COME IN HERE.
THANK YOU.
-SNIFF-
RICK?!
WHAT?
BECKY? IS THAT
TO-
YOU BETTER
GET OVER HERE
RIGHT NOW!!!
YOU BETTER
CHANGE THAT
FUCKING TONE!
JUST GET YOUR
SORRY ASS OVER
HERE RIGHT NOW!
UH- CAN WE- OH.
JESUS- I'M SHAKING.
CAN WE START
AT THE BEGINNING?
NOW, WHO ARE...?
THIS WAS A MISTAKE
...COMING HERE.
I-I'M SORRY.
I SHOULD LEAVE.
NO, NO,
YOU STAY!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT
THE FUCK IS GOING ON
HERE. I CAN'T BELIEVE
THAT FUCKING COCKSNAKE
IS CHEATING ON ME!!!
W-WHEN DID YOU?
I'D RATHER WAIT
TO TALK TO BOTH
OF YOU WHEN HE
GETS HERE.
OK?
UH- I
I GUESS.
SUPPOSE.

WHAT THE FUCK, WOMAN!?
CALL ME UP TALKING SHI...
RICK!!
WHO IS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW WHO IS...?!
YOU TELL ME, ASSHOLE!!
I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS BITCH BEFORE IN MY...
-UH OH-

WHAT IS THIS?
WHAT? WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
RICKY RICKETTS. YOU'RE OUT ON BAIL FOR ATTEMPTED ARMED ROBBERY.
YOU SKIPPED YOUR BAIL.
YOU BROKE YOUR BOND
I'M HERE TO COLLECT YOU.
SHALL WE?!

AW NO!!
NO NO!!!
NO FUCKING WAY!!!
I WOULDN'T DO THAT.
FREEZE IT.
THIS THE GUY JINX?
THAT'S THE GUY.
GOTCHA, FUCKER!
AAAAAAAAAGHH!
SHUT UP, BITCH! WHORE!
THIS IS YOUR FAULT TO...
BEGIN WITH

NOW, THAT KIND OF TALK I CAN DO WITHOUT ALTOGETHER.
MONEY B., YOU GOT 'EM?
I GOT 'EM.
THROW HIM IN THE VAN - HARD.
LISTEN - HONEY, I'M SORRY I FINAGLED YOU. SORRY I LIED.
I KNOW YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME, BUT I AM
AND TRUST ME... I JUST DID YOU THE BIGGEST FUCKING FAVOR OF YOUR LIFE.
'S LIKE MY MOM TOLD ME SOMETHING THE DAY SHE LEFT MY DAD
SHE SAYS TO ME, 'HONEY, MEN ARE LIKE CARS. NO MATTER HOW BIG A PIECE OF SHIT THE ONE YOU GOT TURNS OUT TO BE....
...YOU CAN ALWAYS TRADE UP.'
T.T.F.N.
BASED ON A TRUE STORY.


IT'S A MAN'S WORLD.
"Well, we'll see about that..."
BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS'
JINX
From the creator of the critically acclaimed crime drama "A.K.A. GOLDFISH"

COMING IN MARCH 1996 FROM CALIBER COMICS

Jaime Hernandez

Sketchbook

I CARRY MY WHITE OUT WITH ME..
HAPINESS IS AN OPYOP!
SOME PEOPLE SAY I LOOK LIKE A CHICK..
REDRUM!
MEAT THE BEETLES...
DAT DOG...

I REMEMBER LINCOLN...
M.FELIX
LIL SABRINA!
YOU LOOK LIKE LORD BYRON.

THE FACTOR: PROTECTION

DIE DIE DIE
A WALK WITH A MELT
DIE DIE DIE
A WALK WITH A MELT
STILL FAMILY OWNED
THEO DANIELS HAS BEEN A SMALL-TIME PUNK FOR TOO LONG.
TODAY, THAT ENDS
DYER CLEANING
STONE TONY IN?
EMPLOYEES ONLY
MISTER PIETRANTONIO? IT'S ME, THEO!
I'VE GOT A BUSINESS PROPOSITION YOU'VE GOT TO HEAR...

ANOTHER BUSINESS PROPOSITION, THEO?
THIS ISN'T GONNA BE LIKE THAT BIG VCR OPPORTUNITY YOU HOOKED ME UP WITH, IS IT?
I LAY MY HANDS ON MORE THAN FIFTY VCRS, A LOT OF THEM TOP-OF-THE-LINE, WHO ELSE AM I GOING TO BRING THEM TO?
YOU RIPPED OFF A FUCKIN' REPAIR SHOP, THEO!
WHAT'M I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH FIFTY BROKEN VCRS? SELL 'EM TO BLIND PEOPLE?
SO WHAT'S IT THIS TIME? CRASHED CARS? BAD MEAT? TICKETS TO LAST WEEK'S BALL GAME?
I'M NOT TRAFFICKING STUFF ANYMORE. THAT WAS ALWAYS TOO LOW CLASS FOR A GUY LIKE ME ANYWAY, Y'KNOW?
I'M IN WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A SERVICES BUSINESS I'M ACTING AS A REPRESENTATIVE FOR SOMEONE'S SERVICES.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE BRAINS IT TAKES TO BE A FUCKIN' PIMP!
I GOT PLENTY OF BRAINS, STONE TONY. AND I AIN'T NO PIMP.
WHAT I'M SELLING IS SAFETY!
NEW YORK STAR

BOY, YOU'RE A FUCKIN' IDIOT IF YOU THINK I'LL LET YOU RUN PROTECTION IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD!
AND IF YOU THINK A PUNK LIKE YOU CAN LEAN ON ME OR ON ANY OF JOHNNY D'S FRIENDS, YOU'RE FUCKIN' INSANE!
I'M JUST THE MESSENGER--
--THAT'S THE GUY WHO'S MAKING THE OFFER!
NEW YORK STAR
"NEW FACTOR" NAILS FIREBUG
COSTUMED HERO SNAGS ARSONIST IN THE ACT!!!
THAT FACTOR GUY, RUNNING PROTECTION? RIGHT. HE'S SOME KIND OF A GODDAM HERO!
--SO NOBODY SUSPECTS NOTHIN' THERE'S NO MONEY IN BEING A GOOD GUY! YOU KNOW THAT!
EVEN IF-- IF--IT'S TRUE, HE'D NEVER MESS WITH JOHNNY D'S OPERATION!
READ THIS THING! THIS TORCH WAS ONE OF JOHNNY D'S
THE RESTAURANT HE WAS LIGHTING UP HAD RECENTLY REFUSED THE SERVICES OF A JOHNNY D-APPROVED FOOD VENDOR. GET MY DRIFT?
THAT'S HIS WHOLE GIG! GET PEOPLE ON HIS SIDE--
NEW YORK STAR
NEW FACTOR NAILS FIREBUG
THIS WAS TH NEW FACTOR'S DEMONSTRATION BEFORE MAKING THIS COLLECTION PUSH!
IT'S A SWEET PLAN. YOU GOTTA GIVE HIM THAT. SHAKE DOWN THE CROOKS. THEY DON'T PAY, YOU BUST THEIR OPERATION, AND LOOK LIKE A REGULAR SAINT SOMEBODY!
AND WE CAN'T EXACTLY SIC THE COPS ON HIM
WHAT'S HE ASK NG?
NEW YORK STAR
NEW FACTOR NAILS FIREBUG

FOR YOU, FIVE HUNDRED BUCKS. PER MONTH.
EACH OF YOUR DEALERS AND AGENTS, TWENTY BUCKS.
SIX MONTHS IN ADVANCE.
AS PROTECTION GOES, THAT'S QUITE AFFORDABLE.
YEAH, NELL.
HE FIGURES, WHY MAKE TROUBLE? THE WHOLE CITY'S HIS TURF, HE CAN AFFORD TO BE CHEAP!
QUANTITY BUSINESS, EH?
YEAH HELL, I JUST COLLECTED FROM LONGLEAR AND BRIDGIE, AND I GOT AT LEAST THREE MORE STOPS TODAY.
I JUST MADE A PURCHASE--
SO I'M CASH-SHY AT THE MOMENT COME BACK AT SEVEN?
CAN DO, STONE TONY!
NO HARD FEELINGS I HOPE! IT'S JUST, Y'KNOW, BUSINESS LIKE I SAID, I'M JUST THE MESSENGER.

THE NEXT FEW HOURS ARE NOT WASTED
NEW YORK STAR
NEW YORK STAR
The Spot
HE MAY NEVER HAVE BEEN A SERIOUS PLAYER, BUT HE KNOWS THE GAME WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW WHO THE PLAYERS ARE.
THE TRICK IS KNOWING HOW MUCH TO CHARGE. INSTINCT SHOWS A LINE BETWEEN BEING A FINANCIAL ANNOYANCE AND BEING WORTH FUSSING ABOUT.
OF COURSE, INSTINCT ISN'T PERFECT
THEO FOCUSES ON THE MID SIZED PLAYERS, THE MIDDLE MANAGERS OF ORGANIZED CRIME
VERGREEN
HINESE
STAURANT
ELIVERY
NTRANCE
N ALLEY
AFTER ALL, THIS IS A NEW TRADE FOR HIM.
BETTER TO LEARN IT WHERE A MISTAKE WOULDN'T KILL HIM.
HE ISN'T ABOVE PLYING HIS TRADE WITH SMALLER PLAYERS, THOUGH. OPPORTUNITY IS WHERE YOU FIND IT.
THE DAY HAD BEEN A BUSY ONE, AND IT LOOKS LIKE JUST ONE SIMPLE PICK-UP TO GO BEFORE HE CAN CALL IT A NIGHT.
LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING.

MISTER DANIELS? SOMEONE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU!
THAT'S JOHNNY D'S CAR!
THAT'S JOHNNY D.
HOP IN!
YOU'RE THEO DANIELS?
YEAH, UH, SIR
YOU'RE THE INDIVIDUAL WHO'S BEEN CAUSING MY ASSOCIATES, MY FRANCHISEES, GRIEF ALL DAY?
NOT ME! OH, NO NO NO! I'M JUST THE SHIT-BOY!
UH, THE GO-BETWEEN! THE NEW FACTOR, HE'S THE GUY MAKING THE OFFER
THIS NEW FACTOR, HE TURNED OVER A USEFUL ASSOCIATE TO THE LAW YESTERDAY. AND NOW HE'S PUTTING THE TOUCH ON ME, OR HE WILL INTERFERE FURTHER?
THAT WAS JUST A DEMONSTRATION!
SOMEHOW, THAT FAILS TO IMPROVE MY VIEW OF IT

I KNOW THIS JUST SEEMS LIKE A SHAKEDOWN, BUT REALLY, IT'S AN OFFER THAT CAN DO YA GOOD!
THIS I'VE GOT TO HEAR
SO NOW WE COME TO WHAT WE USED TO CALL THE SIXTY-FOUR THOUSAND DOLLAR QUESTION, ALTHOUGH THAT MAY BEG THE ANSWER
HOW MUCH?
DESPITE THE CHEAP PRICE, YOU KNOW SOME OTHER BOSSES AIN'T GONNA PAY IT. SO WHILE YOU'RE GETTIN' OFF FOR A SMALL FEE, HE'S GIVIN' THEM PLENTY OF TROUBLE.
COULD CREATE SOME EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHT?
FIFTEEN GRAND A MONTH.
SIX MONTHS IN ADVANCE.
EVERYTHING IN CASH
CONSTRUCTION
KEEP OUT!
TAKE CARE OF THIS, BRUCE.
MAKE IT MESSY.

DID YOU GET THE WITNESS?
YUP. SHE'LL SWEAR TO GOD A GUY IN A COSTUME WITH A STAR ON HIS CHEST DROPPED THIS PUNK FROM THE SIXTH FLOOR.
COST US TEN GEES OF WHAT WAS PROBABLY BAD DEBT ANYWAY.
YOU THINK THIS SHMUCK WAS REALLY WORKING WITH THAT "HERO?"
PROBABLY NOT. BUT YOU NEVER KNOW!
IF THEY WERE WORKING TOGETHER, THEN I'VE TAUGHT THIS NEW FACTOR A LESSON.
IF DANIELS WAS JUST RUNNING A SCAM, WE'VE SENT OUT A MESSAGE THAT YOU DON'T SCAM THE BIG BOYS.
AND IF WE MAKE THE NEW FACTOR LOOK BAD IN THE PROCESS, CAUSE HIM A LITTLE GRIEF
THEN IT'S CHRISTMAS ALL OVER AGAIN!
END

DREAM LOVERS

Making love in the middle of the night
The lovers forget who they are.
He is in a dream, partially.
He forgets who he is.
She is leaving a dream.
She forgets who he is, too.
In her dream, he is a woman she knows
but still her husband
or a woman becoming her husband
or her husband in the guise of a woman.
In his dream, they are both State Troopers.
One is from Idaho, one from Wyoming but he doesn't know which is which.
She is wearing a tie-clasp in the shape of the state she serves and protects.
He feels it, trying to identify it by feel.
It feels like Kentucky.

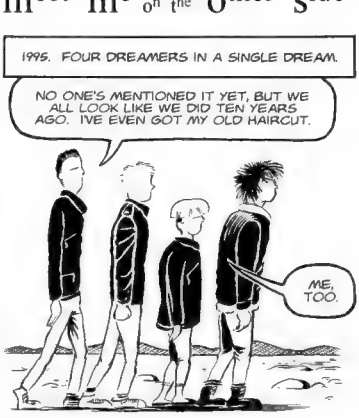
They make love with sleepy intensity
And he thinks only of her, and how exciting she is
and tries to figure out if she's from Idaho and he's from Wyoming
or if it's the other way around
or if maybe they're both from the same state.
Confused, but with passion unaffected.
Half asleep, he takes her hand, to feel for their engagement ring
and it is her, it is his wife.
He's made love to his wife as they slept.
She seduces him twenty four hours a day
especially when his mind is free of consciousness and he is really himself
He's made love to her in his dreams, pleased at his good judgment.
or a State Trooper.

Written by
PAUL ERICKSON

Drawn and lettered by
PAUL FRICKE

1984. THE YEAR OF THE UNEVENTFUL. MID-WAY IN AN EIGHT YEAR STRETCH OF REPUBLICAN SAMENESS. MID-WAY BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL BRITISH PUNK ROCK EXPLOSION AND THE SEATTLE GRUNGE REKINDLING.
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN WHEN WE'RE OLD?
YOU, MY FRIEND, WILL BE A WRINKLED MESS, WHERE AS I WILL REMAIN THE SAME.
AND, FOR THE COLLEGE AGED CROWD OF THE TIME, THEY WERE THE GENERATION BETWEEN THE MORE FLAMBOYANT BABY BOOMERS AND GENERATION X. THE SHORT SPANNED 'BLANK GENERATION'. BUT NO ONE REMEMBERS. NOT EVEN THEM.
BUT THEN, YOU ALREADY LOOK OLD NOW, CARL.
GO TA HELL.
ARE WE STILL GOING TO KNOW EACH OTHER WHEN YOU'RE OLD MEN AND I'M AN OLD BAG?

NO REGRETS {2} meet me on the other side


1995. FOUR DREAMERS IN A SINGLE DREAM.
NO ONE'S MENTIONED IT YET, BUT WE ALL LOOK LIKE WE DID TEN YEARS AGO. I'VE EVEN GOT MY OLD HAIRCUT.
ME, TOO.

IT'S YOUR SECOND CHANCE, KIDS. TIME TO DO IT RIGHT.
IT'S THE SECOND COMING OF KENNY SILVERS, TOO, APPARENTLY.
DON'T MAKE ME BLUSH, NOW.
YOU SAID WE WEREN'T DREAMING, BUT . . . WE WERE DRIVING A CAR BEFORE AND NOW ALL OF A SUDDEN WE'RE WALKING. THAT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT HAPPENS IN A DREAM.
OKAY, I WAS BEING DRAMATIC. THIS IS A DREAM, BUT IT'S EQUALLY VALID A REALITY AS THE WORLD YOU WAKE UP TO.
THE CAR DISAPPEARED BECAUSE WE LEFT THE GENERAL DREAM PLANES AND ENTERED AUBURN.
AUBURN? ISN'T THAT BY SACRAMENTO?
NOT THAT AUBURN. THIS AUBURN. A REGION WITHIN THE DREAM WORLD. I RUN THE PLACE, MY FRIEND.
AND I'M GIVING YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE THE WORLD OUT THERE FOR THIS ONE . . . PERMANENTLY.
MAN, THIS IS A LAME DREAM.
LAME? GET WITH THE PROGRAM, MCGOWAN. THIS IS A BETTER WORLD. YOU DON'T WANT TO BE SNUBBING MY INVITATION.
OR PERHAPS I SIMPLY WON'T ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE.
GET OUTTA MY FACE.
I'LL KICK YOUR ASS
C'MON, YOU GUYS!
LOOK, I'LL DEMONSTRATE. SEE THESE LITTLE CAIRNS OF ROCKS? I MADE THEM DURING MY FIRST TRIPS HERE, AND WHENEVER I RETURN, THEY'RE JUST THE SAME. WHATEVER YOU BUILD HERE IS PERMANENT. NORMAL DREAMS AREN'T LIKE THAT.

GO AHEAD AND BUILD SOMETHING. STACK SOME BROAD FLAT STONES RIGHT ABOUT THERE.
LOOK AT IT THIS WAY. WHENEVER WE DREAMED OF EACH OTHER DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS, WE WERE JUST DREAMING UP FABRICATED ACTORS OF EACH OTHER.
KEEP THEM IN A SQUARE SHAPE, AND STACK THEM TALLER.
NOW WE'RE ALL DREAMING THE SAME DREAM, IN THE SAME PLACE. AUBURN.
MAKE THE SIDES AND BACK ABOUT A FOOT TALLER.
AUBURN IS A STABLE REGION WITHIN THE MORE CHAOTIC DREAM PLANES. A PLACE FOR DREAMERS WHO ARE FILLED WITH REGRET.
MAKE THE BACK EVEN TALLER. THAT'S IT.
HOW CAN YOU KNOW ALL THIS?
I TOLD YOU . . .
I'M THE MASTER DREAMER.
AND LOOK, HERE COME MY FOLLOWERS!

THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING THE LAST TEN YEARS? RUNNING THIS CREEPY DREAM-LAND?
NO, NO. THIS IS A RECENT GIG. I'VE BEEN OUT IN THE REAL WORLD, PRODUCING BANDS AND STUFF LIKE THAT.
BUT AFTER ARRIVING HERE I THOUGHT ABOUT OUR OLD BAND, NO REGRETS, FROM '84, AND DECIDED WE COULD TAKE IT TO THE TOP IN THIS PLACE.
MY DESIRES ARE LIKE A BEACON HERE. THESE REGRETFUL DREAMERS ARE DRAWN OUT OF THE GENERAL DREAM STREAM FLOWING PAST. THEY ACCEPT ME AS LEADER, AND BUILD FOR ME FOR US. FOR THE BAND. CLEVER, EH?
BUT WHY YOU? HOW DID YOU GET THIS POWER?
AH, YES! MY SECRET ORIGIN! IT WAS FANTASTIC!
YOU'RE THE ONE. YOU WILL REBUILD THIS CITY
NOT ME, MAN! WHERE THE HELL AM I ANYWAY?
I WAS HIRED FOR THE JOB DIRECTLY BY THE LAST MASTER DREAMER.
HE GAVE ME THE POWER TO DO WHATEVER I WANTED.
YOU ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE INITIAL DREAM PLANE TO AUBURN AND BACK, NEVER BEYOND.

I WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE, AND I QUOTE, "YOU ARE A MAN BORN WITH NO REGRETS."
I CHOSE YOU BECAUSE OF ALL THE DREAMERS DRAWN HERE, YOU HARBOR THE MOST VAST AND SICKENING AMOUNTS OF REGRET.
REGRET.
KIM, HAVE YOU EVER REGRETTED NOT . . . ?
BZZZNT
6:30
MIKE FLYNN AWAKES IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1995.
KIM HENDRIKSON WAKES IN NEARBY CONCORD.
Pacific Bell White Pages
A to Z
San Francisco
276 FLYE Deborah & Keith 1409-55
699 Flynn-See Also-Flinn
019
559 FLYNN A
483 Alan & Debby 3112 Churchi
854 Albert & Virginia
079 B
514 B
642 B J 25 Omaha Ct
697 Brian D
933 C 7554 Skelton Wy
504 C E
913 C J & Elizabeth
164 5931 Courtney Ct
391 Carol & Michael
700 C
656
918
611
512
149 055 West El Ca
562 Olympus Dr
409
109
558 Carnegate Wy
791 Marshall Wy
546
278
789

THE METHADONE CLUB #2

PHILLIP HESTER

I AM A DUCKLING.
MY NAME IS THEODORE.
I LIVE ON A QUIET POND.
IN THE MORNING I LIKE TO SWIM.
I CHASE THE WATER BUGS AND THE WATER BUGS CHASE ME.
AT NOON, I LIKE TO REST IN THE GRASS AND WATCH THE BIG DUCKS FLY HIGH UP IN THE SKY.
LATER, I NIBBLE ON BREADCRUMBS IN THE PARK.
IN THE EVENING, I GO BACK TO MY POND AND LISTEN TO THE CRICKETS SING.
AT NIGHT, I TUCK MY HEAD UNDER MY WING AND DREAM ABOUT MORNING.
WHITE RIOT
HATE

THIS IS MY STORY. I'M TELLING IT TO YOU SO THAT YOU'LL KNOW -- SO YOU WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES I MADE... IT'S ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET MIXED UP WITH THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS... MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT'S ABOUT A BOY...A BOY I WANTED TO LOVE, ONLY --

He Wouldn't Eat Meat!

AN "**EMPTY LOVE**" STORY

...ANYWAY, MY FAMILY AND I GAVE UP MEAT FOR GOOD WHEN WE LEARNED ABOUT THE INTENSE SUFFERING THE ANIMALS HAD TO ENDURE -- ALSO, WE DISCOVERED WHAT THE FATTY DEPOSITS IN RED MEAT CAN DO TO YOUR HEART....
BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO MY HEART?!

"LIFE IN OUR TOWN WAS PRETTY **SIMPLE**! WE WERE A QUIET, SLEEPY LITTLE **BURG**, WHERE EVERYONE WAS PRETTY MUCH THE **SAME**...

ANOTHER STEAK, DEAR?

WHY NOT? THREE'S A LUCKY NUMBER!

"EVERYONE IN OUR TOWN DID PRETTY MUCH WHAT WAS **EXPECTED** OF THEM... AND **ATE** PRETTY MUCH WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF THEM...

MOMMY, WHAT'S FALAFEL?

PUT THAT BACK, HONEY! MOMMY'S GOT **BRISKET** AT HOME!

"GIRLS MY AGE WENT TO SCHOOL... AND AFTER SCHOOL, WE RAN ERRANDS FOR OUR MOTHERS--

HEY, JANET! ARE YOU COMING WITH US TO THE **FUTURE HOUSE-WIVES OF AMERICA** MEETING?

I CAN'T, CARRIE!.. I PROMISED MY MOM I'D PICK UP SOME MEAT FOR DINNER!

Ooooh! MAYBE **HERBIE'S** WORKING TODAY!

"MR. JOHNSON WAS THE HEAD BUTCHER AT OUR MARKET..

HI, MR. JOHNSON!

HELLO, JANET! I'VE GOT THOSE PORK CHOPS YOUR MOTHER WANTED!

"HERBIE WAS MR. JOHNSON'S ASSISTANT...

Oh, HI, JANET! WE'RE HAVING A SPECIAL ON BEEF TIPS-- JUST FOR YOU...

JUST THE PORK CHOPS TODAY, THANKS, HERBIE!

ANY NORMAL GIRL WOULD'VE SUCCUMBED TO HIS CHARMS, BUT TO ME, HE JUST SEEMED SO... **IMMATURE**...

"YES, TO A STRANGER, IT MUST HAVE LOOKED LIKE THE **PERFECT** WORLD! YET, SOMETIMES I WAS **TROUBLED** BY STRANGE THOUGHTS... LIKE SOMETHING WAS **MISSING** FROM MY OTHERWISE IDYLLIC PUBESCENT LIFE...

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS-- UNTIL I WENT TO THE PRODUCE SECTION FOR POTATOES AND FOUND...

Oh!

EXCUSE ME! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M FINE! NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE!
I GUESS INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER! I'M JANET ELLIOT!
I'M KENT LEWIS! MY PARENTS JUST MOVED TO TOWN LAST WEEK!
LAST WEEK? FUNNY, I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AT MY SCHOOL!
Oh, I GO TO SCHOOL IN BEANTOWN!
"BEANTOWN... THE PART OF TOWN THAT NO ONE TALKED ABOUT--BUT EVERYONE KNEW ABOUT! PART OF ME WAS SHOCKED--REPULSED--YET ANOTHER PART OF ME WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS STRANGE, EXOTIC WORLD....
THEN--YOU'RE A... VEGETARIAN?
Oh, SURE! MY FAMILY'S DONE A LOT OF RESEARCH ABOUT THE EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF FATS IN SOME MEATS....
"KENT WAS TALKING ABOUT HIS MEATLESS WORLD EVEN AFTER WE LEFT THE STORE... AND, LIKE IT OR NOT, MY HEART WAS BASTING IN ITS OWN JUICES...
--AND THE CALVES ARE KEPT IN CAGES THAT DON'T ALLOW THEM TO SIT COMFORTABLY--Oh, BUT LISTEN TO ME RAMBLE! YOU MUST THINK I'M AN AWFUL BORE....
Oh, NO! NOT AT ALL!
"ALL THE WHILE, MY MIND TOLD ME I SHOULD RUN FROM THIS BOY OF A DIFFERENT UPBRINGING.. BUT MY HEART HAD OTHER PLANS....

Oh! AND THAT STUFF IN THE CENTER OF OREOS...?
Oh, KENT, I DON'T CARE! I JUST WANT TO BE WITH YOU-- WHATEVER WE EAT!
"BUT OUR TENDER MOMENT WAS SHATTERED MOMENTS LATER...
WELL, ISN'T THIS A PRETTY PICTURE!
"CARRIE AND ANNE'S ENTRANCE MEANT IT WAS TIME FOR US TO PART-- FOR NOW...
SO-- TOMORROW AT SEVEN?
Oh, YES, YES KENT!
"I WAS AFRAID MY GIRLFRIENDS WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND-- AND I WAS RIGHT...
JANET! HOW COULD YOU?! HE'S FROM-- BEANTOWN!!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- HE'S NO DIFFERENT FROM US!
YEAH!
Oh, COME ON, JANET! DO YOU WANT TO BE THE WIFE OF SOME PEACE CORPS WORKER?!
YEAH!
24

"A DAY EARLIER, THEIR WORDS MIGHT HAVE MADE SENSE... BUT NOW, I WASN'T SURE OF ANY-THING...
JANET! DID YOU GET THOSE PORK CHOPS?
"AND IF MY FRIENDS DIDN'T UNDER-STAND, I KNEW MY PARENTS WOULDN'T...
HI, DADDY!
OH, HELLO, DEAR. I'M JUST READING ABOUT THE NEW TROUBLES IN BEANTOWN... NOW THEY'RE IMPLYING THAT SMOKING IS DANGEROUS!
"AND WITHOUT MEANING TO, MY PARENTS JUST MADE MATTERS WORSE...
THOSE BEANTOWN FREAKS! NEXT THEY'LL BE WANTING TO MOVE INTO OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND MARRY OUR WOMEN! MARK MY WORDS, HELEN, NO DAUGHTER OF MINE--
"I KNEW DADDY WAS JUST VENTING FRUSTRATION OVER HIS POWERLESSNESS IN AN INCREAS-INGLY IMPERSONAL WORLD... ONLY THIS TIME, IT CUT A LITTLE TOO CLOSE...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?! WHY DOES EVERYBODY WHO'S DIFFERENT FROM US HAVE TO BE A "FREAK"?!?
JANET!
WHA--?!
"AFTER THAT OUTBURST, I RAN AWAY FROM THE TABLE AND INTO MY ROOM... I WASN'T SO MUCH ANGRY AS I WAS CONFUSED... AND IT WAS MAKING MY HEAD HURT....

A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER....
JANET? HONEY, WHAT'S WRONG?
OH, NOTHING, MOTHER, ONLY-- ONLY COULDN'T WE JUST HAVE A BIG SALAD SOME NIGHT?
THUNK
OH, HONEY!
....REALLY?
DEAR, YOU'RE TRYING TO THINK FOR YOURSELF-- AND THAT'S ALL RIGHT! EVERY GIRL GOES THROUGH THIS PHASE! EVEN I DID-- UNTIL I MET YOUR FATHER!
"I SMILED BACK AT HER, THROUGH THE TEARS-- BECAUSE I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO DO....
GOOD GIRL! NOW, HOW ABOUT SOME FRUIT COCKTAIL? THAT DOESN'T HAVE ANY MEAT!
ALL RIGHT, MOTHER....
"AND I KNEW BY THE LOOK IN HER EYES SHE DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND.
FREAKS!
PEACE CORPS WORKER!
YEAH!
"THAT NIGHT, AS I SLEPT, THE WORDS OF MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY ECHOED IN MY DREAMS....

"BUT EVEN AS THEIR WORDS PLAYED OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD, IT WAS KENT'S FACE THAT SHONE THROUGH...
YOU HAVE TO FEED LIVESTOCK TWENTY-ONE POUNDS OF PROTEIN TO GET BACK FIVE!
"IT'S STRANGE WHAT LOVE MAKES YOU DO SOMETIMES... THE NEXT NIGHT I'D TOLD MY PARENTS I WAS GOING TO THE LIBRARY... I DIDN'T EVEN CARE ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES IF THEY'D LEARNED I WAS MEETING KENT BY THE TRACKS...
HEY, JANET! READY TO SEE HOW THE OTHER HALF EATS?
"I SUPPOSE I COULD BLAME MY BUTTERFLIES ON THE FEAR OF BEING SPOTTED BY MY FRIENDS, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN THAT. EVERYTHING WAS HAPPENING SO QUICKLY--ALMOST TOO QUICKLY....
Seth's
WELL, HERE WE ARE....
"I'D NEVER SEEN SUCH A RESTAURANT! THE WAITRESSES DIDN'T WEAR HAIR NETS -- AND ALL THE PLANTS WERE REAL!
"WE FOUND A TABLE AND SAT DOWN... KENT SEEMED TO KNOW THE WAITRESS...
HI, ELENA! THIS IS JANET'S FIRST TIME HERE!
WELL, WELCOME! MAY I SUGGEST THE TOFU WITH SAUTEED VEGETABLES?
THE WHAT?!

MISO
SOY MILK
COUS COUS
HUMMUS
TEMPEH
TOFU
"I LOOKED AT THE MENU... AND SUDDENLY MY EXCITEMENT TURNED TO TERROR... I'D NEVER HAD TO MAKE SO MANY DECISIONS IN MY ENTIRE LIFE... WHAT WAS I -- A SIMPLE CARNIVORE CONFORMIST -- DOING HERE?
"SO MANY CHOICES... IT WAS ALL TOO MUCH! I HAD TO GET AWAY.. HAD TO LET MY HEAD CLEAR..
JANET!
JANET! JANET!
Seth's
JANET! JANET!
"BLIND WITH PANIC, I KEPT MOVING... PART OF ME WANTED KENT TO COME AFTER ME... TO BRING ME BACK -- AND PART OF ME KNEW HE COULDN'T....
OH, KENT.. OUR LOVE JUST COULDN'T LAST!
"MY EYES WERE OPEN, BUT I WASN'T LOOKING AT ANYTHING THEN --
OH!
HEY!
HERBIE!
I WAS JUST COMING OVER WITH SOME MARINATED TRIPE -- CARE TO JOIN ME?
"THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL TELL YOU THAT MUSIC IS THE FOOD OF LOVE DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT!"
The Beginning....

no man is an island

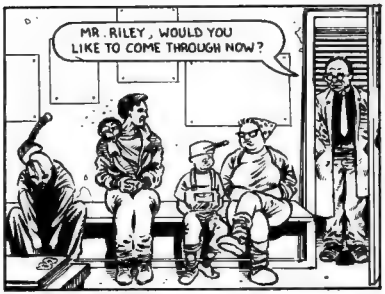
and only one is a planet

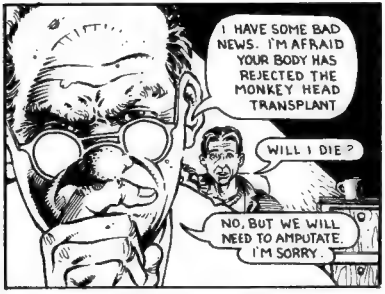
HE'S COMING AROUND. GO GET THE DOCTOR.
I AWOKE FROM THE OPERATION FEELING LOUSY. MY STOMACH HURT, MY HEAD HURT, MY THROAT FELT LIKE FIRE.
SURPRISINGLY, MY TESTICLES FELT GREAT
YOU READ ALL KINDS OF STORIES ABOUT OPERATIONS, AND I HAD IMAGINED THAT I WOULD AWAKE FULLY CASTRATED OR WITH TWO BRUISED FOOTBALLS THROBBING AWAY.
MR. RILEY? CAN YOU HEAR ME?
IT WAS MY HEAD THAT FELT FUNNY. MY HEAD AND NECK. STRANGE, SORT OF STINGING SENSATION.
QUICK NURSE, FETCH A MIRROR
MY EYES FELT KIND OF FUNKY TOO, LIKE I WAS SEEING THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY. AS IF MY PRIORITIES HAD SUDDENLY SHIFTED
"I WAS THE THING WITH TWO HEADS!
IT WAS AS IF SOMETHING INCREDIBLE HAD HAPPENED TO ME, AND I WAS THE ONLY PERSON NOT TO NOTICE.
THE SUSPENSE WASN'T TO LAST LONG, HOWEVER.
ROSS
ITAL
AARRG!
I'VE GOT A MONKEY HEAD!!
STORY: MIKE MADDOX
ARTWORK: MIKE PERKINS

MR. RILEY, FOR YOU TO SURVIVE THIS TERRIBLE ACCIDENT, YOU NEED TO ACCEPT THAT THIS THING HAS HAPPENED.
ACCEPT?! I COME IN FOR A VASECTOMY AND YOU GRAFT A MONKEYS HEAD ON MY SHOULDERS, AND THAT'S AN ACCIDENT?!
WELL, WE HARDLY DO THESE THINGS ON PURPOSE. SO YES, I'D CALL IT AN ACCIDENT.
PLEASE, HELP ME TO HELP YOU ACCEPT IT.
OKAY, I ACCEPT THAT IT'S HAPPENED.
GOOD VERY GOOD
AND YOU THEREFORE ACCEPT THAT FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN, THAT MUST MEAN THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?
THAT'S LOGICAL, YES?
YES
GOOD AND IF SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, THAT MEANS SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER, RIGHT?
AND, IF IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER, THAT MEANS IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN, AND WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY GOING TO HAPPEN TO SOMEONE, AND IT JUST HAPPENED TO BE YOU.
ER... YES.
EXCELLENT! YOU ADMIT IT WASN'T OUR FAULT AND WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS.
SIGN HERE.

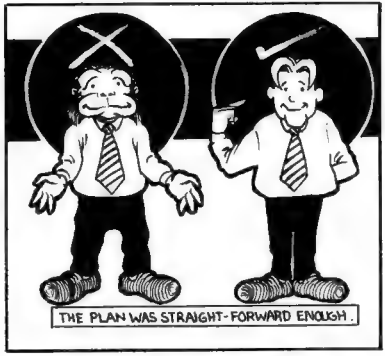
HEY! WAIT A MINUTE!
YOU MEAN THAT LET'S YOU OFF THE HOOK?
100% CERTAIN
BUT THAT'S CRAZY!
MR. RILEY, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO GO AROUND ADMITTING THINGS WERE OUR FAULT. PEOPLE MAY SUE US OR DEMAND COMPENSATION. AND THEN WHERE WOULD WE BE?
PSYCHIATRY DEPARTMENT
NO! I DO NOT ACCEPT THIS, NO WAY!
MR. RILEY, YOU ARE STANDING THERE WITH THE HEAD OF A MONKEY STITCHED TO YOUR OWN NECK, AND YOU ARE SAYING YOU DO NOT ACCEPT THIS? THIS IS NOT RATIONAL. YOU CAN SEE THE MONKEY WITH YOUR OWN EYES...
...INDEED HIS EYES ARE YOUR EYES. YOU CAN SMELL IT. YOU CAN FEEL THE DISCOMFORT LEFT BY THE STITCHMARKS. AND YET YOU REFUSE TO BELIEVE THIS?
I ABSOLUTELY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THIS.
THEN I'M SORRY, MR RILEY, BUT YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL, AND I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HAVE YOU SECTIONED UNDER THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT
THIS, OF COURSE, DENIES YOU ALL LEGAL AID.
NOW, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND, THE RELEASE FORM PLEASE

THE DOCTORS PERSUADED ME IT WOULD BE BEST TO TRY AND RESUME MY LIFE WITH DIGNITY...
. AFTER ALL, IT WASN'T THEIR FAULT, AND I STILL HAD MY HEALTH, MY JOB AND A LOVING FAMILY.
IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME MY WIFE WALKED OUT.
SHE SAID I'D ARRANGED THE TRANSPLANT TO GET OUT OF THE VASECTOMY. WE HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD A HOLIDAY FOR YEARS, AND SHE SAID I'D BEEN USING MONEY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON HOLIDAYS
WITH THE CHILDREN TAKEN INTO CARE BY SOCIAL SERVICES, I RETURNED TO WORK ONLY TO FACE ANOTHER BOMBSHELL
PETS WERE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN IN THE STERILE HI-TECH ENVIRONMENT I WORKED IN - I HAD TO LEAVE
THEY WERE VERY SORRY.
I HAD NEVER BEEN MORE UNHAPPY, ALTHOUGH IT MUST BE SAID THAT THE MONKEY SEEMED FINE.
IT WAS NOT TO LAST.
YAAAAARR!!
SOMETHING TERRIBLE WAS STARTING TO HAPPEN!

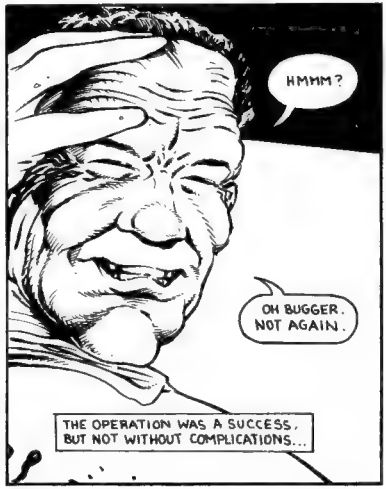

MR. RILEY, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME THROUGH NOW?


I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS. I'M AFRAID YOUR BODY HAS REJECTED THE MONKEY HEAD TRANSPLANT
WILL I DIE?
NO, BUT WE WILL NEED TO AMPUTATE. I'M SORRY.

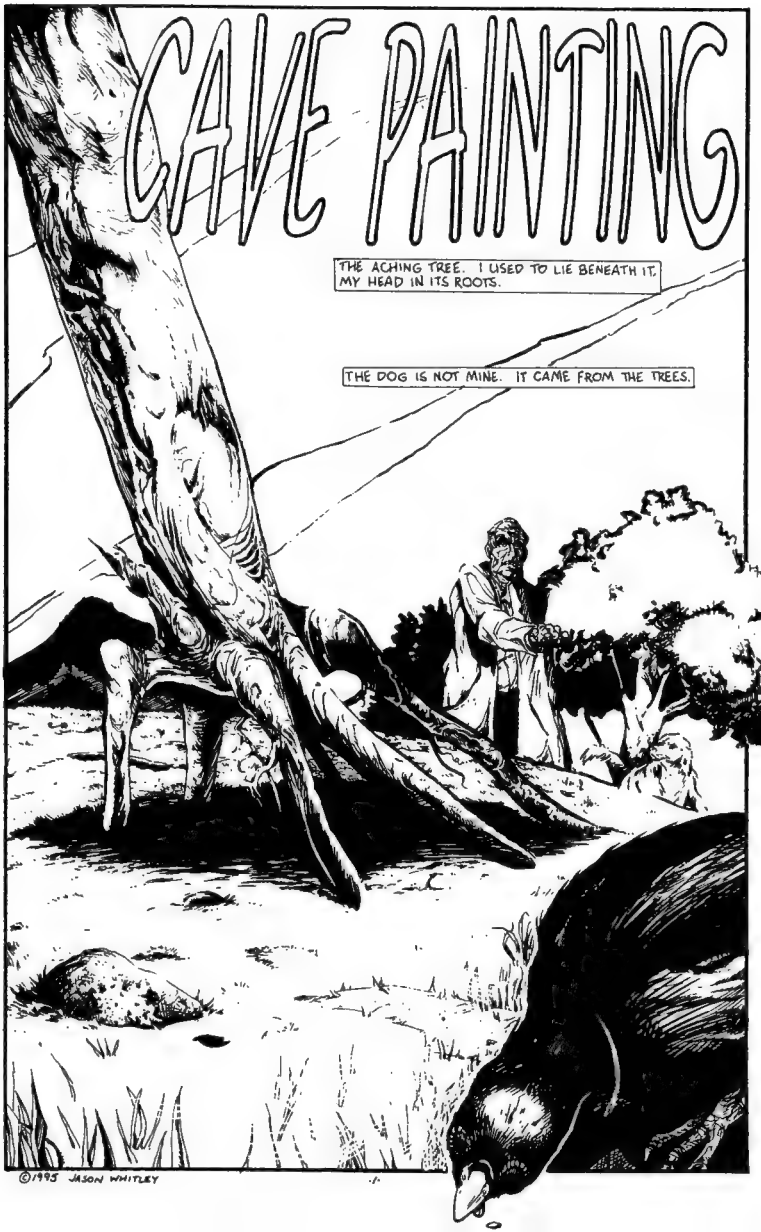
HE'S ALMOST ASLEEP, SO WE'LL START. WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS TO SAW THE MONKEY HEAD OFF WITHOUT KILLING HIM - AND REMEMBER - WHAT'S THE GOLDEN RULE?
CUT THE RIGHT HEAD OFF!!
I HAD UTTER TRUST IN THE SURGEONS THIS TIME.


THE PLAN WAS STRAIGHT-FORWARD ENOUGH.

WELL, THAT SEEMED EASY ENOUGH. IF WE'RE QUICK WE SHOULD CATCH THE BAR BEFORE IT SHUTS. TREBLES ALL ROUND!
DOCTOR? IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THAT?


HMMM?
OH BUGGER. NOT AGAIN.
THE OPERATION WAS A SUCCESS, BUT NOT WITHOUT COMPLICATIONS...

THE MONKEY HEAD WAS REMOVED, BUT IN THE PROCESS A LARGE ALARM CLOCK WAS SOMEHOW GRAFTED ONTO MY SHOULDERS. DESPITE THE DISCOMFORT, I FOUND THE TICKING NOISE QUITE SOOTHING.
I ALSO SEEMED TO HAVE TOO MANY FINGERS ON ONE HAND, ALTHOUGH IT WAS UNCLEAR HOW THIS HAD HAPPENED.
BUT WORST OF ALL, I HAD TO SIP FOOD THROUGH A STRAW AS ALL THE FILLINGS HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM MY TEETH, MAKING MEALTIMES A NIGHTMARE.
BRRR


CAVE PAINTING
THE ACHING TREE. I USED TO LIE BENEATH IT, MY HEAD IN ITS ROOTS.
THE DOG IS NOT MINE. IT CAME FROM THE TREES.
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MY PARENTS WERE IMMIGRANTS. MY FATHER MADE A HUMBLE LIVING FROM HIS SMITHY. THEY BOUGHT A CABIN NEARBY. THIS USED TO BE MY PLAYGROUND.
I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I FOUND THE CAVE.
THERE WAS AN AREA IN THE WOODS THAT WAS ALL SCRUB. LOW LYING BUSHES CARPETED THE GROUND AS FAR AS I COULD SEE, AS TALL AS I WAS.
I CRAWLED BENEATH THEM. EXPLORING. TOUCHING. I CAME UPON AN AREA THAT SLOPED DOWNWARD.
THE BUSHES COVERED THE SKY. THEY WERE ALMOST AS TALL AS TREES NOW.

HERE I SAW THE FIRST ENTRANCE TO THE CAVE I HESITATED TO ENTER. THE DARKNESS OF IT. THE UNCERTAINTY OF WHAT I WOULD FIND. THE EFFECTS OF YOUTHFUL WONDER.
MY NATURAL URGE TO FORAGE AHEAD SURFACED AND I KNEW THAT I HAD TO ENTER.
THE CAVE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY OPENED INTO A CAVERN. CRACKS IN THE CEILING ALLOWED ME TO SEE CLEARLY THE CAVE PAINTINGS THAT COVERED THE WALLS. VERY PRIMAL FIGURES. ALMOST SUBLIMINALLY, YET DEFINITELY, FEMALES. I EXPLORED THE CAVERN. I RAN MY HANDS OVER THE WET SANDPAPER EARTH.
I LAID ON THE FLOOR. GAZING AT THE PAINTINGS. THE CRACKS IN THE CEILING, THE DARK CORNERS OF THE SPACE. I WAS YOUNG AND VERY NAIVE. I HAD NEVER KNOWN SEXUAL AROUSAL. NOW AS I LAY AMONGST ALL THESE SEXY LADIES MY SCROTUM TIGHTENED AND I FELT A CERTAIN ATTRACTION.
AT THE TIME, OF COURSE, I COULD NOT HAVE DESCRIBED THE SENSATION.
I RAN OUT OF THE CAVE AND BACK HOME AT ONCE.
I WAS ASHAMED!
SUDDENLY I FELT A WARM SHOCK IN MY PANTS. WAS I BLEEDING?

TO THINK THAT I WAS ASHAMED NOW SEEMS INCOMPREHINSIBLE. THIS SINGULAR EXPERIENCE MOLDED THE REST OF MY LIFE I WOULD BE A PAINTER.
I MADE THE DECISION TO ATTEND CLASSES AND LEARN THE CRAFT. IF I STARTED HERE, I KNEW THAT I WOULD HAVE THE BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD MY ART.
MY CLASSES PROGRESSED LIKE I WAS BORN TO OIL PAINT. I WAS A STAR PUPIL.
IT WAS MY WORK THAT GARNERED THE ATTENTION OF YOUNG WOMEN. THIS ATTENTION DUMBFOUNDED ME.
I WASN'T USED TO BEING ANYWHERE NEAR THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.
THERE WAS ONE GIRL WHOSE SHY AFFECTION FOR ME I COULD NOT HELP BUT RETURN.
LEIGH MARNER WAS HER NAME.
WE STARTED TO GO OUT IN COLLEGE.
SHE WAS MY FIRST MODEL. SHE WAS ALSO MY FIRST LOVE. I NEVER THOUGHT MUCH OF THE CAVE BUT WHEN WE DECIDED IT WAS TIME, IT WAS THE FIRST PLACE THAT CAME TO MIND.

THIS WOULD BE THE SECOND TIME FOR ME TO VISIT THE CAVE, THE ONLY TIME FOR LEIGH. WE STAYED AT MY PARENTS' CABIN. THEY WERE AROUND SIXTY AT THE TIME.
ONE AFTERNOON, LEIGH AND I STROLLED THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE. I TOLD HER ABOUT THE CAVE WHERE WE WERE HEADED AND WHERE I REMEMBERED IT WAS.
THERE WEREN'T ANY BUSHES TO BE FOUND. THE ONLY SCRUB WAS TALL GRASS. I WAS ABOUT TO GIVE UP WHEN I NOTICED A PECULIARITY IN THE SHADOW OF A HUGE BOULDER. IT WAS A HOLE ON ONE SIDE AS IF THE BOULDER HAD A SHADOW GOING IN EITHER DIRECTION.
LEIGH WAS UNCERTAIN BUT DECIDED TO HUMOR ME AND WE CLIMBED DOWN.
IT WAS THE SAME AS BEFORE, EXACTLY AS I REMEMBERED
ON SEEING THE STRANGE, ANCIENT WOMEN, LEIGH BLUSHED.
THE WARM CARPET OF WET EARTH EMBRACED OUR FIRST KNOWLEDGE. LEIGH AND I WERE MARRIED A FEW YEARS AFTER COLLEGE.

THE PAINTINGS HERE, SO PRIMITIVE, WERE WHAT ENCHANTED ME. I HAD A NEW VISION AND HAD LEARNED THE TOOLS WITH WHICH TO REACH THAT VISION.
MY PAINTINGS WERE NEW AGAIN. I WAS INVOLVED WITH THE PHYSICALITY OF PAINT. I WOULD COMBINE SAND AND OILS, SCULPT THE PAINT TO IMPREGNATE THE FEMININE IMAGE WITH POWER. A PRESENCE.
THE AIR BETWEEN A VIEWER AND ONE OF MY PAINTINGS WOULD BE ALMOST SOLID.
MY PASSION GREW OVER A PERIOD OF THIRTY YEARS TO BE THE PASSION OF THE MASSES. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF I WAS EVERYWHERE. I REALIZED THAT A LOT OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MY WORK HAD DILUTED IT.
REPRODUCTIONS IN BOOKS ALLOWED PEOPLE TO SEE MY WORKS, DECIDING, WITHOUT ACTUALLY EXPERIENCING THEM, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ENJOYED THEM, MY VERY PHYSICAL, SCULPTED PAINTINGS! AND PEOPLE WHO HAD NEVER SEEN ONE, THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD THINGS ABOUT ME THAT I COULD NEVER KNOW. MAYBE I COULDN'T EITHER. BUT THE ATTENTION!
AND OTHER PAINTERS JOINING IN THIS PRIMITIVE MOVEMENT! THEY WERE BEING COMPARED TO ME!

AS THE MAINSTREAMING OF MY PAINTINGS DILUTED THEIR STRENGTH, IT ALSO PROVIDED ME WITH A FORTUNE. I WAS KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY, TRAVELING FROM CONTINENT TO CONTINENT AS I PLEASED. I HAD VIRTUALLY STOPPED PAINTING. LEIGH AND I WERE SOMEWHAT DISILLUSIONED WITH LIFE BUT VERY HAPPY TOGETHER.

UNTIL RECENTLY WHEN SHE BECAME ILL...
I GUESS ONLY THREE YEARS AGO IT WAS THAT SHE DIED.
I WAS AT HER BEDSIDE FOR THREE MONTHS BEFORE THAT, DOING EVERYTHING I COULD TO SAVE HER.

AFTER HER DEATH I BROKE DOWN. I TRIED TO KEEP TRAVELING, GOING TO OPENINGS OR SPECIAL EVENTS.
BUT NOTHING WAS THE SAME. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR SOME KIND OF ESCAPE BACK INTO LIVING.
NOTHING WORKED.
SO I AM HERE. AT MY PARENTS' OLD CABIN.
I WOKE UP THIS MORNING THINKING ABOUT THE CAVE.

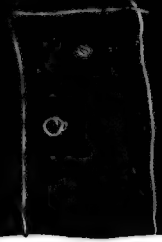
NOW, HERE IT IS. ONLY NOTHING'S THE SAME.
IT'S NOT BURIED DEEP BENEATH BUSHES NOR DOES THE ENTRANCE HIDE IN THE SECOND SHADOW OF A BOULDER.
HERE IS AN ENTRANCE. I KNOW THAT THE INTERIOR WILL BE THE SAME.

THE CAVE PAINTINGS. THE FEELING OF EXCITEMENT! THE NERVOUS EXPECTATIONS! I CAN FEEL SOMETHING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE YEARS. NOT ONLY ALIVE BUT AROUSED!

TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Doors - by R. Lewis ©1995

I draw my doors with permanent markers.



Marks-a-lot markers are very bold and easy to see.

In comics, doors shut and slam without making a sound.

Outside, a less permanent world wants in...

CALIBER COMICS

CHECKLIST

JANUARY • FEBRUARY 1996

JANUARY

THE APPARITION #1
"Whispered Promises" is a tale of the anger and betrayal of a broken trust, lost innocence, and the consequences they play on the fragile mind of the victim. Adriel must attempt to save Tammie from the worst obstacle of all, herself. Written by James Pruett, with art by Gene Gonzales and David Rowe. $2.95.

DOMINIQUE: Quick Shots GN
"Quick Shots" collects the critically-acclaimed series starring the hard-boiled bad girl, Nikki Sinclair. Stories are by creators Charles and Lisa Moore with art by Gene Gonzales, Casey Jones, and Matthew Smith. Cover by Ken Meyer, Jr. $12.95

EXIT #3
In this issue, Karl is desperate to prevent Louise from leaving the country, and finds the help he needs from an unlikely ally. By British creator Nabiel Kanan. $2.95

INTERFACE Graphic Novel
Interface is the follow-up to the Full Color *ESPers* Graphic Novel. FULL COLOR. Written by James Hudnall with art by Paul Johnson. $12.95

KILROY IS HERE #6
Unable to watch the continuing genocide of the citizens of war-torn Sarajevo, Kilroy attempts to aid the victims of this human tragedy. Written by Joe Pruett with art by Mike Perkins. Special Kilroy back-up story written and illustrated by Phillip Hester (Swamp Thing). $2.95

LEGENDLORE #1
Set in a land rich in majestic fantasy, Legendlore, explores the exploits of an elfin warrioress and a recent tragedy that forces her to embark on a journey within herself and the world outside. Created by Joe Martin (Seeker, Powercardz) with art by Philip Xavier. $2.95

NEGATIVE BURN #31
This issue features a prelude tale to "Jinx", a new series from Brian Michael Bendis (AKA Goldfish), plus British artist Kevin O'Neill teams with Aldyth Beltane on the "Abyss Also Grasps"...and much more in 64-pages! $3.95

OZ #13
Dorothy Gale and Peter must battle Goblins to escape the Emerald City. Meanwhile, the Freedom Fighters find out what has become of the Golden Cap that controls the winged monkeys... Written by Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr with art by Bill Bryan. $2.95

RAVEN CHRONICLES #6
"The Healer" features Kent and Michelle investigating a faith healer who claims he is able to cure diseases and injuries. Written by Randall Thayer and illustrated by Seppo Makinen (Mr. Hero) and Ray Snyder. $2.95

UNDERSIDE #2
The Underside- a land of myth, where magic and madness live and Mr. Scriken, an evil so vile that denizens of the Underside are afraid, has come to destroy the souls of the undead. Created by Paul Kowalski and Reginald Chaney with art by Tim Holtrop and Paul Kowalski. Cover by Guy Davis. $2.95

WORDSMITH #1
A representation of one of the most acclaimed series ever! Wordsmith is the saga of a pulpsmith...a writer who struggles to make a living in the era of the pulps. Featuring the talents of Dave Darrigo and R.G. Taylor, best known for his work on Silencers and Sandman Mystery Theatre. 48-pages. $2.95

Check your local retailer first, but if you have difficulties locating CALIBER titles call
1-800-346-8940 for order information

FEBRUARY

CAVEWOMAN #1
Caliber's premiere issue features Cavewoman in the time traveling town of Marshville, where she encounters tornadoes, furious storms, and restless prehistoric beasts from one to one-hundred tons! Written and illustrated by Budd Root. $2.95.

DOORMAN: FAMILY SECRETS #2
DoorMan finds himself drawn deeper into the mystery that surrounds the twin sisters and the secret that haunts them both. Written by Mike Leonard and illustrated by James Lyle. $2.95.

KABUKI:CIRCLE OF BLOOD G.N.
This compilation collects all 6 issues of the acclaimed Kabuki series, plus an expanded story, sketchbook and pin-up gallery! Circle of Blood delves into the world of the NOH, a Japanese government agency, who employ an assassin known as Kabuki with a dangerous job...to become an icon for a country in a war between technology and tradition. Written and illustrated by David Mack. 272 pages for $16.95.

KILROY IS HERE #7
In this issue Kilroy is witness to an 11-year old girl in war torn Bosnia-Herzegovina living through the death of her family, attempted rape by soldiers, and the end of her innocence. Written by Joe Pruett and illustrated by Mike Perkins. $2.95.

NEGATIVE BURN #32
Well known and respected creators Joyce Brabner and Mark Badger bring us "Survivors," an honest look at growing up Cambodian in America. Also in this issue Craig Gilmore, Stephan Petrucha, and many more...64 pages! $3.95.

NEGATIVE BURN: Best of Year Two
Featuring the best short stories of the second year in a 128 page Graphic Novel! Creators include: Alan Moore, Evan Dorkin, Paul Pope, Phillip Hester, Nabiel Kanan, Brian Bolland, Andrew Robinson and many more! $9.95

OZ #14
Ozma declares that the time has come to begin the war. Meanwhile, in the palace of the Emerald City, the Freedom Fighters must battle the Nome King and a horde of winged monkeys under his control, including their former comrade Nameless! Written by Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr with art by Bill Bryan. $2.95

THE SCYTHE #1
Psychiatrist Richard Smythe seemed to have it all, until his wife and child are murdered while he helplessly watches. Sickened by his fear and powerlessness...a despair that can only be lifted by vengeance and atonement...an force known only as the Scythe. Written by Gregg Kendrick with art by Ed Herrera. $2.95

TATTOO #2
Tattoo arrives in New Orleans and assists a gang of humans called Blues before continuing her quest for the "Gate Opener." Written by Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr with art by Jake Jacobsen (Aquaman). $2.95

WORLDS OF H.P. LOVECRAFT: The Statement of Randolph Carter
A New York criminal psychologist invades a grave to uncover the secret of "why certain corpses never decay..?" Adaption by Steve Jones with art by Chris Jones. $2.95

WORDSMITH #2
This issue centers around two different inspirations. The first concerns a writers ethical problem, should he surrender his integrity to please a bigoted employer. The second tells the story of an orphaned boy who is abused by his foster father. Written by Dave Darrigo and illustrated by R.G. Taylor. $2.95

What is it that separates good from evil?
KILROY
WAS HERE
Now Monthly.
Joe Pruett • Mike Perkins

Greg Greene
editor@waldo.nashv.lib.tn.us

Joe,

I'm sorry to hear about your price increase woes. I know that's a difficult decision to make, but if the quality of NEGATIVE BURN stays as good as issue 27, then I think your choice will be a good one. (As an aside, I've heard that if growing the hemp plant were legal, we could produce with one acre of it as much paper--and a higher quality stock, at that--as two acres of trees, and, of course, we could grow it back each season. I'm dead set against drug use, but this could solve so many current and potential problems.)

Quickly, my thoughts on this issue.

"Suburban Nightmares: Mister Ford" was an enjoyable story with an art style that appears simple, but is very evocative, and fits this subject well.

"Bad Morals" was imaginative and very well drawn. Not much point or characterization to the story, but it had a cute ending. I'd like to see the creators do more with Mala Morales.

"John Robbins and Me" was really competently written. By the end, I thought Stephen Cheng was taking himself a little too seriously, but the last panel gets him off the hook.

"Coffee Break" was more creepy than gross, which is admirable. It was pretty much just a build up for the last panel, but they gave the narrator enough of a character to keep me quite interested.

"The Roadie's Tale" by David and Phil was great, the high point of the issue. Please give us more. Well written, well drawn, and perfectly suited for black and white comics.

I wish I hadn't been eating lunch when I read "Pain". Ugh...page filler...

I thought at first "Nightvenger" had really swell art, until I realized that I couldn't tell what was going on in most panels. A little clarity will do this obviously talented artist, Joel Thomas, some good.

Thanks for the fine issue, Joe. Keep it coming.

You want more Mala Morales, Greg, well, you got it. Watch for her to return to these pages in the near future and, even better, watch for her to appear in her own regular series, SECTION 8, from Mr. Oeming sometime in the fall of 1996 from the good folks at Caliber Comics. That's Caliber Comics, always aiming to please!

Jason Whitley
scruffito@aol.com

NB 27 is another solid effort. I just skimmed the superhero story, but it seemed to be well done. I happen to be one of the people who thinks it's out of place in NB. Same with Bad Morals. The only thing it made me think about was the nice artwork. I loved John Robbins and Me. And Mr. Mamoulian is the best I've seen so far. The Suburban Nightmares story was a little anticlimactic for me. I enjoyed the first two installments and was really looking forward to the climax but the climax didn't seem to be quite enough to be worth the wait. As usual, I enjoyed the rest!

I hope all you readers out there have taken the chance to read over Jason's addition to this issue, "Cave Painting." It's always nice to be able to include the creative talent of one of our regular contributors to the letters pages. Remember, that's how a number of present day creators got their starts.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Due to the overwhelming amount of submissions I get each month and the ever-growing number of titles I now work on at Caliber Comics (MOEBIUS COMICS, KILROY, NEGATIVE BURN, CAVEWOMAN, EXIT, THE CREEP, BANDY MAN, SECTION 8, Mark Badger's new series, the P. Craig Russell collection, etc.) I'm going to have to start a new policy. I will no longer accept just scripts. I just don't have the time to read over scripts and even less time to put writers and artists together. So from now on, if you have a submission to send to me for NB it will have to be COMPLETELY DONE. Sorry. I know how hard it is for writer's to break into the field, and I'm trying my best to find the best new talent out there, but I simply don't have the time. As it is, my turnaround period to answer submissions has greatly increased (I'm currently doing about 3-4 months response time), and a big reason for this is the number of scripts I get. I do read every one of the submissions I get and do respond personally to each one and that takes time. Time I no longer have. So, please, if you want to submit to NB, have the proposal completed before you send it in. This will get you a much quicker answer and save me a lot of time. Thanks.

Olav Beemer
Brugakker 36-06
3704 LP Zeist
The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

NEGATIVE BURN 27, in a flash.

"Suburban Nightmares" ended just when I was beginning to truly enjoy it. The artwork needed time to grow on me, but in retrospect, this lovely and moody three-part story was an incredibly entertaining one. Especially the subplots and recurring themes were a nice touch. In short, I'd like to see more the Hancock/Cherkas team.

"Mr. Mamoulian" was a real blast this time around. Love it!

"Bad Morals" turned out to be a mixed bag feature. While I simply adored the fine artwork and the intense use of captions, I must admit that the story itself lacked a tad bit, in that the conclusion was rather abrupt.

"John Robbins and Me"--a great study of how the shattering of a childhood dream of fantasy can affect one's personality and actions. Intelligent stuff, packaged in a simply yet strikingly effective style of artwork. Best feature of this issue, no doubt.

"Coffee Break," the Frier/Hill production, reminded me a bit of the hard-hitting DOMINIQUE tales I've read over the last months. A clear style, well-written, the only difference being the totally weird ending. Where are Fox and Dana when you need 'em, eh?

"The Methadone Club." Hey, it's Phil Hester stuff. Satisfaction guaranteed, so nothing but thumbs up on his one-pager.

"Pain" was nice, simple, and piqued my interest. Artist Paul Fricke's work is very cartoony and powerful, and I wouldn't mind seeing more of his work in these pages anytime soon.

"Nightvenger." Ack-super-hero material in this title? Culture shock! Culture shock! Culture shock!

All in all, a more than decent issue, for which my compliments. Also, congrats on jacking the page count up again. Sixteen extra pages for a buck-I can go for that! Especially if it means more Hester, DiGenti and Pope material.

I sure hope you're finding the extra 16 pages per issue worth the $1, Olav. I'm very happy and pleased with the new format and hope that everyone else is as well. How did I ever get by without 64 pages a month?

You'll be seeing much more of Hester, DiGenti, Frier, Oeming, and Fricke in the coming months (actually, you'll be seeing Fricke in every issue as he's become a regular contributor to the title for the foreseeable future), so keep reading and buying!

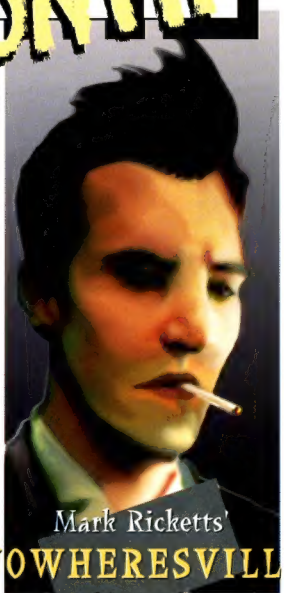
CALIBER COMICS

CRIME MONTH

Brian Michael Bendis'

JINX

ongoing bi-monthly series



Mark Ricketts'

NOWHERESVILLE

ongoing bi-monthly series

Brian Michael Bendis'

AKA GOLDFISH

Trade Paperback

NOIR MAGAZINE
ALL-STAR ANTHOLOGY
OF CRIME FICTION

MARCH
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